

The TEPP “Walk-the-Walk Tour”

(Journal Entry #2)

Since our first journal entry last month, much has happened and it's difficult to know where to start!

First of all, we just received late-breaking news that Phoenix has been chosen to host the National Conference on Tobacco or Health in June, 2009. For the past several weeks the TEPP staff has been working diligently to help Phoenix advance in the competition with other major cities, and with a final push last week (with the help of our statewide partners) we managed to be chosen. Of course, now the real work begins, as we commit ourselves to making the 2009 NCTOH the best ever! This is a major milestone in the resurgence of TEPP as a national leader in tobacco control, and will serve to motivate us over the challenging road ahead.

Also, in the past two weeks we have launched the thirty-member Strategic Plan Workgroup (a diverse group of stakeholders charged with oversight of the planning process), and have held three community forums. Indeed, we have passed the point of no return, and are officially off and running!

At the Workgroup meeting on August 21st a number of critical topics were discussed, including expectations, desired outcomes of the process, and their collective vision for the future. One week later, we initiated perhaps the most intense and exciting part of the planning process when we held the first of over thirty community forums that will be conducted around the state. At the forums we will be obtaining input from community members and stakeholder groups regarding tobacco control priorities in Arizona over the next three to five years.

In addition to providing a venue for people across the state to provide input that will help shape the future of tobacco control in Arizona, the forums mirror a new TEPP in which we remain committed to create a statewide network where all partners are truly engaged in the fight to reduce non-ceremonial tobacco use. To reflect this new way of thinking and doing, we have are referring to the community forum process as the **“TEPP Walk-the-Walk Tour” (WTWT)**.

The first forum, held on August 29th, was conducted with members of the Tobacco Revenue, Use, Spending and Tracking (TRUST) Commission, and provided valuable insights as well as some honest feedback on the overall design protocol for the community forums that are now taking place in every corner of the state. Based on our observations and comments received from the group, it is safe to say that forum participants and observers left the event with a combination of emotions, as folks were stimulated by the intensity and honesty of the discussion, and perhaps a bit overwhelmed with a deep sense of the challenges and sensitivities that are required to ensure that all forums are grounded in the time, space, and specifics of a very diverse statewide network.

Since then, On-The-Mark, Inc., who is charged with ensuring a thorough, neutral facilitation of the community forum process, has conducted two additional forums with equally challenging audiences (the TEPP staff and an audience of about 100 community partners and contractors). All three of these two-hour forums have been lively, heartfelt, and resulted in intriguing ideas about possible pathways for the future. They also provided critical feedback on the design protocol that future forums must follow to ensure focused dialogue by adapting to a variety of audience sizes and make-up.

As you can imagine, the coming month is jam packed. The next meeting of the Strategic Plan Workgroup is scheduled for September 18th and we officially kick off the community-based forums on September 20th at St. Vincent de Paul in Phoenix. From there, the **Walk-the-Walk Tour** heads out on the highway, stopping at places like Mammoth, Douglas, Kykotsmovi and Bullhead City (see attached list/schedule of community forums). Please take time out to join us at one or more of the upcoming forums and do not hesitate to encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.

YOUR opinion is extremely important to us! We hope to see you on the road!